

VZCZCXYZ0002
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHNJ #0409/01 0731214
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 141214Z MAR 06
FM AMEMBASSY NDJAMENA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 3339
INFO RUEHUJA/AMEMBASSY ABUJA 0972
RUEHAR/AMEMBASSY ACCRA 0278
RUEHDS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA 0648
RUEHBP/AMEMBASSY BAMAKO 0511
RUEHKM/AMEMBASSY KAMPALA 0326
RUEHKH/AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM 0059
RUEHLC/AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE 0721
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 1208
RUEHNM/AMEMBASSY NIAMEY 2485
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 1596
RUEHYD/AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE 0959

UNCLAS NDJAMENA 000409

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LONDON AND PARIS FOR AFRICAWATCHERS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [CD](#)
SUBJECT: CHAD: VIEW OF OPPOSITION LEADER FROM EAST

REF: A. A. NDJAMENA 360

[1](#)B. B. NDJAMENA 400

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: The leading oppositionist from the East, Ibni Oumar, describes the drawdown of Chadian security forces in the border area as a net plus, despite the resulting lawlessness. He says that his public call for obstruction of the May 3 election has not yet taken specific form. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Poloff called on oppositionist Ibni Oumar Mahamat Saleh March 13. Ibni Oumar, from Biltine, is one of the six leading figures in the opposition coalition CPDC. A member of the Oueddai ethnicity which is concentrated in the area of Biltine and Abeche (linguistically related to the Tama, around Guereda, and the Masalit, around El Geneina, and others in the Maba group), Ibni Oumar is the only significant in-country opposition figure from the East.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Ibni Oumar said that it would be unfair to characterize the Chadian opposition, especially the parties that came together in the CPDC two years ago and have maintained their cohesion ever since, as stubborn or negative. The CPDC, he said, would boycott the May 3 election, and some of its members (he included, ref B) had called for obstruction of the election. But their hostility to this election, he said, had to be seen in the light of the 15 years of rule by Deby. With the best will, the political class in Chad had sat down with this ruler in the 1993 national conference to produce a new constitution and two sets of elections. He and others who were now staunchly in the hostile opposition had agreed to run in elections and even agreed to serve from time to time in Deby's government, hoping thereby to promote a spirit of reconciliation and to help build a better Chad. Deby had demonstrated that it was all too possible in Chad to write a good constitution and have an adequate set of laws on the books but see them rendered worthless by a strongman holding the reins of power (state revenues and force of arms). A critical element, on which the opposition had depended, had been the constitutional requirement that Deby serve no more than two terms. By mounting a fraudulent referendum to change that essential requirement, a referendum based on fictional voter

lists and fictional voting results, Deby had gone beyond redemption. The country was poised on the verge of complete collapse, thanks to this robber baron, he argued.

¶4. (SBU) Poloff asked what form obstruction of the election might take. Ibni Oumar said that the CPDC had not yet produced a specific strategy for dealing with the election, and, he admitted, the CPDC might not be able to come to agreement on a specific strategy. But he anticipated a call for a massive turnout of the populace, as nonviolent as possible, specifically to assert their unwillingness to vote. He said that he had met the UNDP resrep March 10 and conveyed his and the CPDC's lack of interest in any conceivable arrangement that might involve their participation in this election.

¶5. (SBU) Noting that Ibni Oumar hailed from the area where the Zaghawa, Arab, and Maba ethnic groups interfaced, Poloff asked Ibni Oumar's views on Darfur and recent violence in eastern Chad. Ibni Oumar acknowledged that there had been an increase in lawlessness in the border area, entailing raiding of some villages (mainly Dadjo ethnicity) along the border south of Adre and hijacking of NGO cars north of Adre. The proximate cause, he said, was the sudden "retreat" of Chadian gendarmerie and armed forces from along most of the border, after the rebel attack Adre in December. On balance, he said, the absence of these forces was a good development. The greatest source of instability and terror in the area, he claimed, had been these very forces, whose commanders were 90 percent Zaghawa and Gorane (far northerners) and who constantly bullied and robbed the local populace. Now, with this respite from Zaghawan deprecations, what he called "bandits" had seized their opportunity. The local people, especially the Dadjo, were forming their own self-defense forces and were beginning to be able to cope with these bandits, whose identity was not clear. Ibni Oumar doubted that they were made up principally of Arabs, as there had not traditionally been animosities specific to the Chadian Arabs, unlike in Darfur, and he had not heard believable claims to this effect. He dismissed the idea that these "bandits" had been sent to Chad by Sudan. Rather, local bands, probably of varying ethnic make-up, had been taking advantage of the situation.

¶6. (SBU) As for Darfur, Ibni Oumar thought disarmament was going to be one of the most difficult issues. Having liberally handed out arms to Arabs in Darfur, Sudan no longer had much control, either of some of the Darfurian Arabs (most populous ethnicity there after the Fur) or over the sea of arms flowing throughout Darfur and into Chad, on top of the flow coming from Libya and Chad into Darfur. To conclude, Ibni Oumar brought the discussion back to the imperative of peaceful change of regime in Ndjamena, offering his view that a failure to reverse Chad's slide would make impossible any resolution of Darfur, since the Deby regime (Deby's Zaghawa henchmen if not always Deby himself) had nurtured the rebellion from its inception and his regime was teetering on the brink of violent collapse.

¶7. (U) Bio Note: Ibni Oumar Mahamat Saleh is the head of PLD (parti pour les Libertés et le Développement), one of the few parties that is not highly ethnically-based. He is spokesman for the CPDC. He was generally seen as an ally of the ruling party until he ran for the presidency in 2001, which incurred a rebuke from the Grand Imam for splitting the Muslim vote. A PhD in mathematics, he held planning and other ministries in the late 1980's and 1990's.

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